Nola Pender and the Health Promotion Model

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Health promotion has been defined by the World Health Organization's 2005 Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World as "the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improve their health." Health promotion has never been more important than it is in the present day. Nurses in education, practice, and research settings can participate in the advancement of health promotion not only to the mainstream but to the forefront of nursing practice.

In the past, nurse educators have taught their patients how to manage illness; in the future, the focus is directed towards teaching people how to remain healthy. Nurses must have an evidence-based understanding of the significant effect that can be made through health promotion interventions and communicate this knowledge to the public at large. As more people grow in their awareness of activities and actions that lead to good health and become knowledgeable about their own health status and the health of their families, the overall health of the population will improve significantly.

Dr. Nola J. Pender is Professor Emeritus in the School of Nursing at the University of Michigan. She developed the Health Promotion Model that is proposed as a holistic predictive model of health-promoting behavior for use in research and practice. This model has been tested internationally with varying health behaviors. Dr. Pender has published many research articles. One of her (Dr. Pender’s), current research focus is on testing the efficacy of a computerized physical activity counseling program for teenage and adolescent girls.

Dr. Pender has authored a widely used text entitled, Health Promotion in Nursing Practice, (4th edition) which received the ANA Book of the Year Award for contributions to community health nursing. She has served as distinguished scholar at a number of universities. She received the distinguished alumni award from Michigan State University and holds an honorary doctoral degree from Widener University for her contributions to nursing research and health promotion. She has received many Distinguished Research Awards during the span of her nursing career.

As the past-president of the American Academy of Nursing, Dr. Pender has also served as president of the Midwest Nursing Research Society. She served as a charter member of the National Advisory Council on Nursing Research. Currently, she is a member of the Board of Directors of Research! America, an organization committed to increasing public support for health research. Nola Pender consults nationally and internationally in health promotion and nursing research even in retirement.

Dr. Nola J. Pender’s Health Promotion Model (HPM) (Pender, Murdaugh, & Parsons, 2006) that has been used in numerous studies to assess influences on health-promoting behaviors. These influencing factors are individual characteristics and experiences

that includes prior related behaviors and personal factors. Personal factors fall into three

categories: biological, psychological, and sociocultural. Biological factors include variables

such as age and gender. Psychological factors include variables such as self-esteem, self-motivation, and perceived health status. Sociocultural factors include such variables as race,

educational level and ocioeconomic status (Pender et al., 2006). Other influences are behavior specific cognitions and affect, perceived benefits of action, perceived barriers to action,

perceived self-efficacy and activity related affect. Specifically, the interpersonal influences of the HPM are cognitions regarding the behaviors, beliefs, or attitudes of others. Whether real or not, primary sources of interpersonal influences that affect decisions made regarding health promoting behaviors are family, peers and healthcare providers. In HPM, interpersonal interaction influences health-promoting behavior directly and indirectly through social pressures or encouragement to commit to a plan.

The Health Promotion Model which was developed by Dr. Pender is used internationally for research, education, and practice. During her active research career, she conducted research testing on the Health Promotion Model with adults and adolescents. She also developed the program “Girls on the Move” with her research team and began intervention research into the usefulness of the model in helping adolescents adopt physically active lifestyles, developing a number of instruments that measure components of the model.

The Health Promotion Model (HPM) proposed by Nola J Pender (1982; revised, 1996) was designed to be a “complementary counterpart to models of health protection.” It defines health as a positive dynamic state not merely the absence of disease. Health promotion is directed at increasing a client’s level of well-being. This model (HPM), describes the multi-dimensional nature of persons as they interact within their environment to pursue health. The model focuses on following three areas: Individual characteristics and experiences, Behavior specific cognitions and affect, Behavioral outcomes.

This model (HPM), notes that each person has unique personal characteristics and experiences that affect subsequent actions. The set of variables for behavioral specific knowledge and affect have important motivational significance. These variables can be modified through nursing actions. Health promoting behavior is the desired behavioral outcome and is the end point in the HPM. Health promoting behaviors should result in improved health, enhanced functional ability and better quality of life at all stages of development.

The final behavioral demand is also influenced by the immediate competing demand and preferences, which can derail an intended health promoting act synthesizes research findings from nursing, psychology and public health into an explanatory model of health behavior that still must undergo further testing. The various health promotion strategies and tools that Dr. Pender has developed can be used as a basis for structuring nursing protocols and interventions. Nurses in practice should focus on understanding and addressing variables that are most predictive of given health behaviors (Pender, 1975).

I am and have always been a strong advocate for health promotion and wellness. As a graduate of Public Health, my major interest in Nursing as a profession is to acquire the clinical skill, which will equip me towards contributing immensely to the health and wellness of the society. The importance of health promotion and prevention can never be over emphasized, all thanks to Dr, Pender and other scholars like her.

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